

for
unlawful
carnal
knowledge

a play

.15

For
Unlawful
Carnal
Knowledge *

Dramatis Personae (an appropriately pretentious
and suitably obscure title
for a cast of characters)

ART—a spirit

Policeman

Newspaperman

Maid

Psychologist and a psychiatrist

Professor of History \ either two men,
Professor of English / or two women,
or mixed

Professor of Political Science

Judge

"the obscene in search of obscenity
will find themselves mirrored herein"
-----R. Schmorleitz

*Dedicated to A.G. who, in any other society would be
a most unusual figure to find pilloried in a public place.

ACT I

Scene I (ART is clothed in his typically tattered 20th century dress—tennis shoes, jeans and "T" shirt—and stands stage center looking down. Raising his head slowly he looks upwards and says:

ART: FUCK
(silence. . . . ART slowly lowers his eyes and looks downward again. . . . policeman enters)

Policeman: I heard what you said you god-damned foul-mouthed beatnik bastard you. Using profaneous language. Why, if my kids used words like that, I'd kick their fu—(breaks off) er, I mean, I'd wash their frigging mouths out with soap. What you got to say for yourself?

ART: Nothing else.

Policeman: Oh yeah? How come?

ART: I don't like being redundant.

Policeman: Well, I heard what you said when you thought I wasn't listening.

ART: What did you hear?

Policeman: Oh no you don't. You're not going to get me to say it. Think you're pretty smart, don't you.

ART: No. . . I just wondered what part you heard.

Policeman: Well. . . I heard plenty enough.

ART: Did you hear me talking
About the circle shapes, waiting, open-stretching ovals,
Expectantly caressing the rolling hills of yellow
Uphrusting on green stalks?
Well, that was clover night-sleeping, nestled closed-faced
in the crook of the arm of a hill, reaching exploratory
stream fingers into oceans of velvet black
Expectancy—

Policeman: Don't give me no bull, see.

ART: Old John Bull was a Merry Old Soul,

And a Merry Old Soul was he.
He chewed on his pipe
And he called for his bowl,
And he ate with his fingers three.

He was known through the land,
(a rake quick with his hand)
His tines spread wide like a fan.
But one Jolly Day
They put him away,
For being a dirty old man.

Policeman: Quit twistin everything I say, damnit.

ART: (singing—gyrating) Let's twist and twist again
Baby o-o-o-owe-e-e wah-wah.
I wanna hold your ha-a-and
And be-e-e
Your Ma-a-andy sweetie
Do-wah, do-wah...

Policeman: (forgetting himself) Say, that's a good beat...

ART: You might enjoy the meter of this one too:
Peter Piper picked a peck of pickeled peppers—

Policeman: (scornfully) Picking pickeled peckers.
You think you're pretty smart-assed, don't you?
Think I'm going to let you talk your way out of it—

ART: I was only trying to find out an answer to my question.

Policeman: You and your questions. You're, you're an
outrage to public decency—

ART: I was only trying to find out what you heard. The
context you see—

Policeman: You keep talking about filth. Kotex...

ART: You do have an interesting way of interpreting what
I say, don't you? Why, you may even contain the
secret swelling seeds of seething greatness within
that warming fecundity of your mind.
Fertile loam nourished by casually sprinkled Uric rain
—Maiden buds waiting to blossom!
You could be, perhaps, a (pauses)
a critic!... (lays his hand on policeman's shoulder)

Policeman:(shaking him off) Get your fairy-hands off me.

ART: But you misjudge.
I am not of ethereal realms, nor am I here a visitation
of a wingless Ariel.

ART:
Policeman: You beatnik queers are all alike.

ART: What charming jargon! Yes, yes, you'd make a
fine critic. You have just the right kind of limited
sensitivity, that certain crude savoir-faire,
A flare, perhaps, for approaching a poem
With a pick-ax in hand,
Digging out the meaning for all of your followers to see.
(absently) It might be an interesting disembowelment...

Policeman: I heard that.

ART: I'm glad to see you're so attentive.
Very necessary in a critic. Admittedly, you don't
seem to be the least bit concerned about indelicate
speech, and that can lead to rather sloppy syntax— vital
to criticism, you know—

However... I pay little attention to it myself, but...
then I'm not a critic, and have little inclination—

Policeman: I could arrest you, you know.

ART: Wonderful! I've been trying to arrest—to hold—
to grasp in ecstasy... reeling with drunken visions
Of tomorrows where three suns revolve around
One red-blistered moon rising in the west:
A new dawn!
Ah, to hold an audience that way: Arrest them,
Clutch them by their vitals and heave
Them upward to light
On some distant pinnacle of pin-pricking
Exhaultation.

Policeman: All right, you asked for it... You're under
arrest!

ART: The charge?

Policeman: Section 650.5 Penal Code.

ART: A violation?

Policeman: Conduct shocking to the public morals.

ART: I'm rather glad you felt the electricity of my rather eccentric delivery. But, as to your charge, I suppose that covers all manner of sins, does it not?

Policeman: You bet. Now, don't you peter out on me with those lumpen limpnik tactics. . .

ART: Oh, I don't feel impotent yet, Although this particular century has been filled with trying times—

Policeman: Trial? Oh sure, you'll get yours.

ART: Y'Know officer, you're quite charming. . . almost prosaic. Such skillful use of cliché. . .

Policeman: All right, that's enough ostentivity from you. MOVE.

ART: I've been trying to do that with the minds of men for centuries.

(As the policeman drags ART off the stage he concludes)

In fact, I've been lighting the way of fools to dusty Death. . .

Policeman: Who you calling a fool?

ART: (as they exit, imitating the policeman) Who you calling a fool. Hmmm. That's an interesting way to end such a scene as this. . .

(ART is dragged slowly into the wings, and when only his feet remain visible he raises them off the stage and clicks his heels together. . . the policeman is heard swearing. . . there is a smacking sound and then a thud. The feet become limp and disappear slowly behind the curtain)

Act I

Scene II (A series of brief encounters are portrayed in this scene. . . may be easily staged by putting spots on various areas of the stage, tableau fashion.)

First tableau: Newspaperman and a maid. Newspaperman is wearing sunglasses, maid carries a broom.

Newspaperman: There might be some good feature material here. Let's see, something like: Four-letter word screws ART. Hmm. Not printable though.

Damn re-write man would never believe it.

(The maid, sweeping around his feet, gives him a poke with her broom)

Newspaperman: Excuse me.

Maid: (continuing to sweep, not looking at him) You're a reporter -type, aren't you? Come to get the real story, is that it? Well, there's no story here but paper and dirt.

Newspaperman: This place is rather cluttered. (to himself) Oh, maybe it'd be better if I approached it from the young innocent angle... small town girl, big city... radical's loose talk... plenty of sex in it. But how to get around using that word now... let's see..

Maid: (still sweeping) Now you take that guy that got arrested here the other day. At least he didn't litter the place up. Just talking. Not like them that throws down all these papers. (goes back to sweeping)

Newspaperman: Maybe leave four blank spaces? Or say it's a synonym for something. Problem there, though. Readers are pretty stupid. Wouldn't know what a synonym was..

Maid: (looking up from her sweeping, leaning on her broom) Why you wearing sun-glasses on a cloudy day?

(Newspaperman faces her for the first time)

Maid: (continuing) Bug goggles, that's what they look like. Make you look like one of them rock-'n-rollers..

Newspaperman: (returning to his own thoughts) Then again, there's the police angle: Cop Gets Drop on New Pop Craze— Jails ART. Corny.

Maid: (returning to her sweeping) Them Beatles.. I never thought it'd come to that. All that long hair is all right, I suppose, but you know what they say...

(newspaperman looks at her, irritated)

Newspaperman: What?

Maid: The only good bug is a dead bug.
(she goes back to sweeping, lights begin to fade)

Maid: Course, everyone's got their own way
(trails off as lights fade into a dark stage)

2nd Tableau: another portion of the stage lights up. A psychologist and a psychiatrist are drinking coffee and talking...

Psychologist: It's been a rough day.

Psychiatrist: (eager) What makes you say that?

Psycho: Oh, it's not a question of compulsion, or even one
of an unconscious drive over which I have no control.

Psychi: I detect in your manner a certain malaise... not exactly an inter-connected repression, but a whole series of inhibitions inter-locking—

Psycho: No, it's some sort of un-utterable blackness of spirit—

Psychi: Come, come. I realize you sometimes have a tendency toward mysticism, but let's be scientific about this, shall we? My diagnosis is that you have a phobia. A mixture of Xenophobia and hydrophobia...

Psycho: I suppose that's your awkward way of saying I'm afraid of strange waters.

Psychi: Well, well, well. Such hostility! Tch, tch, tch.

Psycho: Oh, come out from behind your contoured professional couch and quit playing priest—

Psychi: Aha! A case of professional jealousy!

Psycho: (relenting sigh) Oh, have it your way. (sips his coffee) You see, it all started—

Psychi: When you were a child?

Psycho: No, it all started earlier today when ART—

Psychi: (taking out a piece of paper from his pocket) Here, what does this say to you?

Psycho: (looking at piece of paper) It says to me that somebody was pretty messy with an ink bottle.

Psychi: You're fighting me. Co-operation is very

necessary you know. A certain rapport—

Psycho: (impatient) All right, I see four letters.

Psychi: Oh?

Psycho: Yes. There's an F— and a U— and a K— and a C—

Psychi: That's very juvenile of you. Regression... Ah,
you don't mind my asking do you, but do you suck your—

Psycho: Of course not. I outgrew that long ago.

Psychi: Well, I just wondered, because you seem to have
had trouble spelling a moment ago. You see (showing
the paper again) You read it wrong. It says very
plainly: F— C— U— K—

Psycho: You ought to see a doctor.

Psychi: (blinking) Why?

Psycho: You can't see any better than I.

Psychi: It's been a rough day—

Psycho: That's what I said in the first place.

Psychi: (anxious) What makes you say that?

(the lights fade out)

3rd Tableau: Another portion of the stage brightens.

A professor of English, a professor of History and a
professor of Political Science are conversing while
waiting for a bus.

Professor of Engl: Mark me.

Professor of Hist: I detect a note of Elizabethian humor
there—

Professor of Engl: Prospero, no doubt. Act I Scene Two,
line eighty-six. . . .

Professor of Pol: A bit of a tyrant, isn't he?

P of Hist: Elizabeth wasn't anyway. She never married.

P of Engl: (to P of Hist.) You have a point there. Pros-
pero could bear some relationship. . . there might be, I
mean, a parallel drawn between—

P of Hist: It is said that the BARD was quite a favorite
with the queen. But that's quite impossible, because
she never married.

P of Engl: Perhaps there is a certain touch of homosex-
uality in the Sonnets, but I rather doubt that Elizabeth—

P of Pol: Was a lesbian?

(Professor of History looks at English prof and they both
turn on the Professor of Political Science, irritated)

P of Hist: (to Poli Sci professor) How's the wife? Did she take the car again and leave you taking the bus home?

P of Engl: Had family squabbles lately?
(carefully scrutinizing his collar) Your collar is rather frayed. Doesn't your wife take good care of you?

P of Hist: (changing subject) I don't know why he did it.

P of Engl: What?

P of Pol: Are you talking about ART?

P of Hist: Yes.

P of Engl: (unsure) There is something to be said about ART for ART's sake..

P of Hist: But that's not ART.

P of Engl: One must judge something first on internal consistency... the intent of ART—

P of Hist: I think you're both confused.

P of Engl: Look who's confusing the issue though.

P of Hist: (running to the edge of the stage) Come on, come on... hurry up, hurry up... don't—don't stop now to argue— Let's do it... come on!

P of Engl: Now what are you babbling about?

P of Hist: (running off-stage, shouting back) Come on!

P of Pol: It might be expedient now. (he hurriedly exits in pursuit of the professor of History)

P of Engl: (hesitating—the sound of a bus is heard—he looks into the wings) Left behind.
They might have told me in simple English...

(blackout as he hurriedly exits)

ACT II

Scene I

(later... a room in the Hall of Justice. A man, soon to be identified is seated behind a desk writing... he speaks aloud as he writes)

Well, that about finishes up another article for Funk and Wagnalis... let's see, where was I?... Oh yes (writes)
A person who willfully and wrongfully commits any act which seriously injures the person or property of another... hmm, some interesting consequences might flow from that... let's see... verbal or written might

sound nice right there... now, maybe a comma...
uses another name for accomplishing lewd—nice word
that, lewd... ummm... or... now what's another good one?...
aha!—licentious purposes... are accomplished or not,
or who willfully and wrongfully... seems I've used that
phrase somewhere before... (yawns) This is a mite dull.
(yawns again) whether such purpose is accomplished or
not... nice loophole sewn up there—just like knitting. Knit-
one, pearl-two... ooops! (scratches out previous four words
and resumes writing)... now, a comma there, and onto the
finish—FOR WHICH NO OTHER PUNISHMENT IS EXPRESS-
SLY PRESCRIBED BY THIS CODE IS GUILTY of a mis-
demeanor... signed Judge Fringer, acting Municiple
Court Judge... Ah, done at last! (yawns, sleeps)

(Policeman enters, followed by ART who has his arm in a
sling... they approach the Judge who is asleep)

Policeman: Ssssh-h-h. Careful how you wake him.

(ART starts to raise his arm)

Policeman: (loudly) You gonna give the Judge the finger?

(Judge stirs, slowly awakes)

Judge: What is this?

Policeman: Oh, this smart Alec is always screwing around—

Judge: All right, all right. (to ART) What are you charged
with Mr. Alec?

Policeman: (to Judge) He give you an alias already? His
name's not Alec. This bastard's name is ART. I
oughta know. He's given me enough sh—

Judge: (cutting him off before he gets the word out) What
section is he charged under?

Policeman: Section 650.5. Injuries to Persons, Property,
Public Peace, Health or Decency; False Personation
for Lewd purpose..

ART: A fine critic indeed who catches ironies like flies—

Judge: This is serious.

ART: (smiling) Oh, I think it's all rather amusing.

Judge: I could find you in contempt of court.

ART: But I have no greater contempt for this court than for

any other place of this business in which you mortals engage...

Policeman: (to Judge) He's some kinda nut. A prevert—

Judge: (correcting him) A pervert.

ART: Your honor is quite semantically oriented.

Judge: Why, thank you.

ART: It was not flattery I intended.

Judge: Oh?

ART: A two-edged sword pricks—

Policeman: Watch it foul-mouth—

ART: If I may continue, a two-edged sword pricks—

Policeman: Listen you—

ART: (persistant) Pricks any hand which grasps in palm,
Point first without gaze cast past the
Blade's reflection to handle—

Policeman: Double-talk, double talk (whispers to Judge)
Now, he'll fix your waggon buster.

ART: A fine critic. A critical critic! Such clichés skillfully turned, hardly trained in the schooling of this earthly lathe, yet—

Policeman: Making fun of my upbringing, huh?

ART: Not intentionally, but it seems to have let you down quite miserably, you seem to be quite like some Scrofulous toad thrown leg-over-head— three, feet
Four—

Then tumble down a twenty-foot
Well, with naught a gulp of protest.

(the Judge, who has fallen asleep during this exchange shakes himself awake)

Judge: You're charged with violating section 650.5 of the Penal Code. That's Injuries to Persons, Property, Public Peace, Health or Decency; False Personation for Lewd Purpose—

ART: Thou art indeed as clever as thy servant.

(Judge glares at the interruption)

ART: Forgive me. My speech is, at times archaic, but yours? It falls heavy on the ear, sounding, shall we say, constricted? Conceive you then—

Policeman: Conscrascreptives. You birth-control nut—

ART: (to policeman) What a delightful word! I shall have to remember that one. But you really should listen more carefully if you're ever going to be a real critic.

(Judge yawns and reads)

Judge: A person who willfully and wrongfully commits any act which seriously disturbs (yawns) or endangers the public peace or health, or which openly outrages public decency, or who willfully and wrongfully in any manner, verbal or written,

(music begins to play and Judge begins to mumble his speech) accomplishing any lewd or licentious purpose, whether such purpose is accomplished or not...any lewd or licentious purpose...lewd...licentious....

(Judge sleeps, policeman snores. ART approaches, removes the book from Judge's hands)

ART: What wonderous book is this?
Such poetry of confusion as I have ever seen wrought
By the hand of man!
Oh brave new poeple who live in such a world
With mentalities capable of comprehending such
Signification!

(music plays, the scene fades out)

Act II

Scene II (outside the Hall of Justice...the day of the trial. Waiting for court to begin are three groups of people. The psychiatrist, the psychologist in one group. The newspaperman joins them. The professor of History and the professor of English stand in another. Professor of Political Science is standing by himself)

Reporter: (approaching psychiatrist and psychologist)
Could you gentlemen tell me why you're here today?

Psychiatrist: I'm a psychiatrist here on behalf of the
District Attorney's Office. (gesturing toward the door)
I'm going to testify in that case.

Reporter: Is that the Obscenity ART case?

Psychologist: ART, my friend is not obscene.

Reporter: Can I quote you on that?

Psycho: Surely, as long as you don't take it out of context.
You should note that I'm here on behalf of—

Reporter: Who?

Psycho: (coughing) ART.

Psychi: No wonder you choked on that. Speaking for that
depraved corrupter—

Reporter: May I quote you on that?

Psychi: Of course.

(Reporter moves to the Professor of English and the
Professor of History. The psychiatrist and the psycho-
logist, arguing, enter the Hall of Justice)

Reporter: Excuse me gentlemen, could you—

P of Engl: No cameras, I simply abhor cameras.

Reporter: I haven't got one, I just wanted—

P of Engl: Well, if you insist... (turns his head) this is my
best side...

P of Pol: (commenting from the distance) Nice of him to
turn the other cheek.

P of Hist: Members of the Fourth Estate must be given
their due...

Reporter: And what are you here for today?

P of Engl: (aside) Just like a newspaperman. His gram-
mar is simply atrocious.

P of Hist: I am a professor of History at the University.

Reporter: And you? What institution are you with?

P of Engl: Young man, never prostitute a preposition that
way.

Reporter: (writing) What sort of business did you say you
were in?

P of Engl: (aside) Atrocious, simply atrocious.

Reporter: Communications?

P of Engl: (ponderously) I am a professor of English at
the University.

Reporter: May I quote you on that?

P of Engl: Here's my publisher's card. Ask him. (To
History prof) Shall we?

(they go into the Hall of Justice arm in arm)

P of Pol: (tossing his cigarette to the stage and crushing it out) Well, so today they put ART on trial for insanity. That's an interesting political maneuver.

Reporter: Excuse me, I couldn't help but over-hear— About those political ramifications I mean. (writes) Let's see, you think there's politics in it. .

P of Pol: (walking toward the door through which the others have passed) Oh, in a way perhaps, in a way.

Reporter: (alone now) It's beginning to shape up now. (glances at notes) But how is the point ever going to come across if we can't print the word?

(He enters the Hall of Justice also, shaking his head)

Act II

Scene III (immediately following...the courtroom. In this abbreviated trial there is neither a Prosecuting Attorney nor a Defense Counsel. There are only witnesses—consisting of the psychiatrist, the psychologist, the History and English profs. These witnesses sometimes speak in unison much like a Greek chorus or a group of witches in search of a MacBeth)

Chorus: Sing-a-song of four-pense, a pocket book of lies,
You will never beat this rap 'til you specialize.
Choose between Webster, Jung and Freud or Marx,
Or you'll end up a pervert chasing nymphets
in the parks.

(Poli Sci prof enters, followed by reporter)

P of Pol: (sitting, taking out a corn-cob pipe and lighting up he looks over the scene) It never ceases to amaze me, the many guises that depravity sheds when leering at someone else's predicament.

Reporter: Can I quote you on that?

P of Pol: You may, but you won't. (puffs on pipe)

(Policeman enters, followed by the prisoner ART whose condition has worsened. His "T" shirt is in tatters, and he is in need of a shave. The dressing on his injured arm needs changing. His appearance is enhanced by the silver shackles which bind his legs together, causing him to stumble...he is barefoot now)

P of Pol: Hmmmm. In chains again. A rather old story.
(ART looks up briefly and with a trace of a smile enters
the prisoner's dock)

Chorus: Look at those bare feet eeechh!
 He looks like a beat neeechh!
 Ashes, ashes, all fall—

(Policeman interrupts)

Policeman: (to ART) On your feet, you. Show a little
 respect for his honor the Judge.

(all rise... the Judge ambles onto the stage and takes his
place)

Judge: I don't know why you've all come today. This
 case is already closed. There's merely the sen-
 tencing—

Psychi: That's why I'm here your honor, to make a sug-
 gestion as to how to eliminate this menace from our
 midst. For this is indeed a menace which we face.

Psycho: Your honor, you'll have to forgive my colleague—

Psychi: He doesn't have to forgive anybody. Unlike you
 he doesn't act under such compulsions—

Psycho: If you weren't so neurotic—

Psychi: Look who's neurotic! The Xenophobic Moses
 with a water complex!

P of Hist: (to psychiatrist) Arguing from historical
 analogy has its dangers. Xenophon and Moses might—

Psycho: A historian? Can you help me trace for the Judge
 the symbolic phallic connections between Greek and
 Hebraic mores which might explain—

P of Hist: Circumcision as a dripping libation to God? The
 analogy is interesting, but arguing from historical
 analogy—

Psychi: There is a certain cyclical motion to your argumen-
 tation...

P of Pol: (to reporter) It's called going around in circles.

P of Hist: (to psychiatrist) I was not suggesting a rigid
 dialectic—

Psycho: (interrupting) Your honor, this is getting us no-
 where.

P of Pol: Wither thou Horatio...

Reporter: Can I quote you on that?

P of Engl: (edging aside History prof) Your honor,
If you would but heed this humble councilor's plea,
Put this profligate of prideful humility away for good,
And throw away the key.

P of Pol: (aside) And he complained earlier about another's
rhythm...

Reporter: Exactly what's going on here?

P of Pol: It's Greek to me.

Reporter: May I quote you on that?

P of Pol: Why don't you quit quoting people and use your
own words? You probably have a fine imagination—

Reporter: What in hell?.....

P of Pol: See, what did I tell you?

(Reporter's attention is drawn by the History prof who is
approaching the bench)

P of Hist: Your honor, there is a factor of historical im-
portance here—

P of Engl: For ravishing a rhyme,
Let the punishment fit the crime!

P of Pol: Oh, my God!

(The psychiatrist and the psychologist have been poking and
prodding one another, sticking out their tongues and what
not, as if doctoring each other.... History prof is forced
to speak more loudly)

P of Hist: You see, in Puritain times offenses such as his
(casting a quick glance at ART)

P of Engl: (vaguely) ART is my mistress...

P of Hist: Such offenders were placed—

P of Pol: Someone's sex needs checking...

P of Hist: (continuing) Were placed in the stocks and the
words: For Unlawful Carnal Knowledge...

Policeman: (disturbed at the actions of the psychiatrist and
the psychologist) WATCH IT!

P of Hist: was emblazzoned—

P of Engl: Such a fine image!

P of Hist: (continuing) Was emblazzoned there to announce
the crime of the offender to all passers-by.

P of Engl: Splendid! The perfect punishment for a per-
verter of language!

(Judge looks hard at the Poli Sci prof, then at the Policeman, finally at ART. . . . music begins to play as all slumber. ART steps down from the prisoner's dock and kicks free of the shackles. . . he clicks his heels in delight a few times, and starts to exit. He stops and looks back)

ART: Before I go (he wanders toward stage center)
There's one word I'd like to leave with you all.

(He looks downward, then, raising his head slowly he looks upward and says:

ART: LOVE.

(The scene darkens and the music stops. . . in the darkness there are sounds of struggle. . . then silence. After an interval ART steps forward into a spotlight)

ART: At times redundant, at times inconsistent,
At times almost the fool. A child, perhaps,
Hurling a clod of earth into a crystal-eye.
Did you watch the waves turn ripple,
The clarity darkly dissolving, the muddied
Licking at distant shore?

Weep not for the blinded cyclops for he has
Eyes many the more than we imagine.

Floundering in sand, flopping blindly for your
Amusement, ever watching for the opening,
Seeking to discharge the venom of his life.
Then, fish-mouthed, flat-eyed, he lies
Bloated, a fleshy festering swelling in the sun,
Awaiting the salt-touch
of waves to come.

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